

Testimony of Abigail Hendel Levy on behalf of Greening Our Children
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Children's Committee
February 3, 2015

Testimony in support of HB 5653,
An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern to Children

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and honorable members of the Children's Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. As the mother of three young children, a member of Greening Our Children, and a concerned consumer, I write in strong support of HB 5653, An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern to Children. HB 5653 is a critical first step in helping parents make safer choices that protect children's health.

I write on behalf of Greening Our Children (GOC), which is a community of approximately 900 families in lower Fairfield County who believe that all children deserve to grow up safe and healthy, free from chemical toxins and other environmental agents that can harm their physical and neurological development. GOC supports the work of the Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center (CEHC), the world's leading medical research lab, located in New York City, whose scientific studies help identify environmental causes of chronic diseases that afflict children today, including autism, obesity, asthma and cancer. Incidence of these serious diseases is on the rise; scientific research strongly links early life exposure to toxic chemicals in our homes and environment with this increase. GOC helps translate the scientific findings into practical advice for parents, educators and policymakers, with the goal that everyone will make safer choices that protect children's health.

I am an attorney and now stay-at-home mother of three young children, ages 2, 4 and 6. I make choices every day that impact my family's health. I choose the toys we play with, the food we eat, the soaps and shampoos we use, the couch we sit on, whether to spray pesticides on our lawn and insecticide in our home. Thankfully, while pregnant with my oldest child, a relative introduced me to GOC and CEHC, and I became aware of studies showing that children are exposed to hundreds of toxic chemicals in utero, some of them already known neurotoxins, carcinogens and endocrine disruptors. Armed with that information, I decided to make changes to minimize my own chemical exposure and to make my home as safe as possible for my growing family. My efforts include trying to purchase phthalate-free baby products, limiting the use of pesticides in the grass my children play on, choosing lead-free toys for my toddler to put in her mouth, trying to buy certain organic fruits and vegetables, purchasing fabrics for my family room that are not treated with stain-resistant chemicals. Am I doing this perfectly? No. But at least I have the information required to make an educated choice as a consumer and mother.

That is the intent of HB 5653 – to provide science-based information to CT citizens who want to know what chemicals are in the products they purchase for their families. This is invaluable information for citizens and policymakers - in a world where there are approximately 85,000 chemicals available for use, parents need critical information about which chemicals may be hazardous to our children. With attempts to reform the federal law unlikely to pass anytime soon, states like CT are taking the lead. With this bill, the DPH will identify chemicals of concern to children based on toxicity and exposure data and then make recommendations for action to the legislature every two years. Allowing parents to make choices for their families based on current, best-practice science will not cost the state money and it won't kill jobs. CT businesses that use any of the identified chemicals can work with the Chemical Innovations Institute to find safer alternatives. This bill will provide parents and our elected officials with the tools they need to make healthy choices for our families and, as a result, raise healthier, safer children.

Thank you.

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